



National Center for Environmental Health
Division of Emergency and Environmental Health Services

Environmental Health Training in Emergency Response—Level I

Background

Several assessments have demonstrated the need for emergency preparedness and response education and training for environmental health practitioners. However, there is currently no national, comprehensive, standardized education and training program.



To address this need, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) collaborated with federal, state, and local health and environmental health partners to develop a comprehensive pilot training. The nine modules of the Environmental Health Training in Emergency Response (EHTER) focus on key environmental health issues and challenges for emergency response, such as

- food safety
- water quality
- wastewater disposal
- shelter assessment/
sanitation
- vector control/
pest management
- special health concerns
associated with
chemical/biologic/
radiation incidents.

Environmental health practitioners have important roles and perform many critical functions during emergency response, such as conducting shelter assessments, testing drinking water supplies, conducting food safety inspections, and controlling disease-causing vectors. EHTER will better prepare federal, state, local, and tribal environmental health practitioners (e.g., sanitarians, environmental health specialists) by providing the basic knowledge and skills to address the environmental health concerns that result from emergencies and disasters.

More than 450 environmental health practitioners from 35 states and territories have completed the EHTER pilot training. Post-training test scores have consistently shown marked improvement of preparedness knowledge over pre-training test scores. Participant feedback has been very positive and has led to continuous improvements in training with each successive pilot. Participants have demonstrated real-world application of the concepts and information learned, improving response capacity during actual emergencies and disasters such as power outages, train derailment with release of hazardous materials release, tornadoes, and wildfires.

In 2007, the Florida Division of Environmental Health adopted the EHTER pilot curricula and implemented its own intrastate training program for environmental health practitioners.

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EHTER—Level I, Continued

Next Steps

1. Create a train-the-trainer EHTER toolbox for federal, state, local, and tribal environmental health programs. The toolbox will provide training organizers with the materials and guidance to effectively plan and execute an EHTER workshop tailored to a particular region.

The toolbox will contain

- Instructor manual
- Participant manual
- Group exercises manual
- Presentations with speaker notes for all modules
- Training organizer checklist with suggested timelines
- Electronic/printed materials
- Suggested speaker criteria
- Video modules of all sessions divided into subject chapters
- Video module about planning effective workshops



Toolbox Materials

2. Conduct EHTER 2-day Train-the-Trainer workshops in fiscal years 2008 and 2009 for
 - All 10 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services regions
 - Hawaii and the Pacific Islands
 - U.S. Public Health Service response teams
 - CDC environmental health staff
 - National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) annual conference workshop
3. Develop and maintain an EHTER Web site for federal, state, local, and tribal environmental health professionals to share information such as best practices and lessons learned and to continually improve EHTER curricula and training.
4. Establish an EHTER advisory group for environmental health emergency preparedness and response education and training.

CDC will work for the remainder of 2007 to complete development of the toolbox. Other project goals will be addressed as funding permits.

Additional Information

For more information on EHTER, contact CAPT Mark Miller (770-488-7652 or mdmiller@cdc.gov) or Martin A. Kalis (770-488-4568 or mkalis@cdc.gov).

For more information and resources related to environmental health emergency response, visit the CDC Emergency and Terrorism Preparedness for Environmental Health Practitioners Web site at <http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/ehs/ETP>.

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